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A Role to Fulfil

What is my place in the universal work?

We have everyone of us a role to fulfil, a work to do, a place which we alone can occupy.

But this work being the expression, the external manifestation of the most central depth of our being, we can be conscious of its definitive form only when we are conscious of this depth within ourselves.

That is what sometimes happens in cases of true conversion. At the same time that we perceive the transfiguring light and give ourselves to it without restriction we can know also, with the greatest suddenness and precision, why we were made and what is the reason of our existence on earth.

But this illumination is rare. It is determined in us by a whole series of efforts and inner attitudes. And one of the essential conditions for gaining and maintaining in us these attitudes, these soul states, is to devote daily a part of our time to some disinterested work. Daily we must do something which may be useful to others.

A wonderful mother of unnumbered souls

(from *Savitri*, p. 695)

Until the day when we know what is the essential thing which we are destined to do, we must find a provisional occupation which will best manifest our present capacities and our goodwill.

We shall then devote ourselves to this occupation with conscientiousness and perseverance, knowing well that it is only a stage and that as our ideal and the forces in us progress, one day we shall surely be brought to see more precisely the work we have to accomplish. In proportion as we lose the habit of referring everything to ourselves and know more and more how to give ourselves more completely with greater love to the earth and to men, we shall see how our horizon widens, our duties multiply and become precise.

We shall find that our action follows a general line of progress determined by our special temperament.

Indeed, the occupations in which we shall be successively engaged before we become conscious of the definitive form of our action will be in the same direction, of the same type, according to one same mode which is the spontaneous expression of our character, our nature and our own way of vibration.

The discovery of this tendency, this special orientation should be made naturally through one's taste, through a free selection, free from all external and interested considerations.

Men are often reproached for their choice of an action disproportionate to their means. There is a little confusion here.

Those who freely take up a work for which they have a predilection cannot, in my view, make a mistake as to their direction: this work must naturally be the expression of their special tendency. But their mistake lies in this that they wish to accomplish the work at a stroke in its totality, in its integrality both in respect of its depth and specially, its surface extent, forgetting that even their conception of the work is imperfect in proportion to their own imperfection and that, to be wise, they should add to their knowledge of what they *desire* to do the more immediate and practical knowledge of what they are *capable* of doing at the moment.

It is by taking into account these two factors that they can prove their usefulness with the minimum loss of time and energy.

But few act with so much clear-sight and wisdom—a man who is seeking his way falls very often into either of the two opposite errors which are:

To take one's desires for realities, that is to say, to prejudge one's actual forces and capacities and to imagine that one is capable of taking forthwith a place and a role which one can honourably fill only after years of methodical and persevering efforts.

Or to misjudge one's latent powers and to limit oneself wilfully, in spite of one's deep aspiration, to an occupation much below one's means and which will put out little by little the light in him which could have spread its rays to others.

It seems difficult at the outset to direct oneself among these reefs and to find the way of equilibrium, the middle way.

But there is a sure compass by which we can do it:

Whatever we undertake, we should not do it with a view to showing ourselves off. When we go in for fame, for glory, for consideration from our contemporaries, we are soon drawn into making concessions to them. And if we want to have opportunities for self-admiration, we very easily take ourselves for what we are not and nothing can obscure more than the ideal in us.

Let us never say whether openly or indirectly: "I wish to be great, what vocation should I then find for myself in order to become great?"

We must say, on the contrary: "There must be something which I can do better than anyone else because everyone of us is a special mode of manifestation of the divine force, which is one in all, in its essence. To that thing, however humble and modest, I must consecrate myself, and to find it I am going to observe,

analyse my tastes, tendencies, preferences, and without pride or excessive humility I shall do it whatever others may think about it. I shall do it, in the same way as I breathe, as the flower embalms the air quite simply, naturally, because I cannot do otherwise."

From the very moment that we have, even for an instant, abolished in us all egoistic desires, all personal and interested aims, we can abandon ourselves to this inner spontaneity, this deeper inspiration which will enable us to commune with the living and progressive forces of the universe.

The conception of our work will naturally continue to perfect itself in proportion as we perfect ourselves. And to realise this perfection we must not neglect any effort on our part, but with regard to our output of work, it should always and evermore be joyful and spontaneous, even like the water that wells out of a pure spring.

May 14, 1912 *THE MOTHER*

(*Words of Long Ago*, Ed. 1974, pp. 55-59)

Serve only the Divine.

The Mother

The Leader within

TRY to realise the strength within you, try to bring it forward, so that everything you do may be not your own doing, but the doing of that Truth within you. Try so that every hour that you live shall be enlightened by that presence, that every thought of yours shall be inspired from that one fountain of inspiration, that every faculty and quality in you may be placed at the service of that immortal Power within you. Then you will not say, as I have heard so many of you say, that people are so slow to take up this idea, that people are so slow to work, that you have no fit leaders and that all your great men tell you a different thing and that none of them is ready to come forward to guide you in the path that is pointed out. You will have no complaints to make against others, because then you will not need any leader. The leader is within yourselves. If you can only find him and listen to his voice, then you will not find that people will not listen to you, because there will be a voice within the people which will make itself heard. That voice and that strength is within you. If you feel it within yourselves, if you live in its presence, if it has become yourselves, then you will find that one word from you will

awake an answering voice in others, that the creed which you preach will spread and will be received by all and that it will not be very long.... You see a movement which no obstacle can stop, you see a great development which no power can resist, you see the birth of the Avatar in the Nation, and if you have received God within you, if you have received that power within you, you will see that God will change the rest of India in even a much shorter time, because the Power has already gone forth, and is declaring itself, and when once declared, it will continue its work with ever greater and greater rapidity.

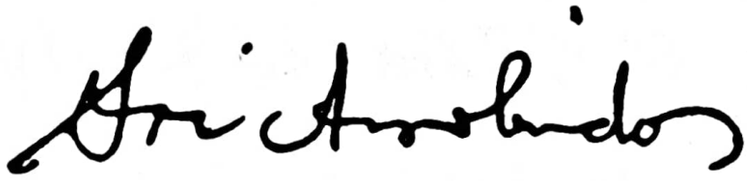
SRI AUROBINDO

(*Bande Mataram*, Cent. Ed. Vol. 1, pp. 664-65)

Live only for the Divine.

The Mother

To place before himself a great object and then to shrink in the name of expediency from the expenditure and sacrifice called for in its pursuits is not prudence but ineptitude. If you will be prudent, be prudent from the beginning. Fix your object low and creep towards it. But if you fix your object in the skies, it will not do to crawl on the ground and because your eyes are sometmes lifted towards the ideal imagine you are progressing while you murmur to those behind, "Yes, yes, our ideal is in the skies because that is the place for ideals, but we are on the ground and the ground is our proper place of motion. Let us creep, let us creep." Such inconsistency will only dishearten the nation, unnerve its strength and confuse its intelligence. You must either bring down your ideal to the ground or find wings or aeroplane to lift you to the skies. There is no middle course.



(*Karmayogin*, Cent. Ed. Vol. 2, p. 50)

Vīramārga

There are some who sit watching for an *ādeś* and, until the *ādeś* comes, are resolved not to act. But to such the command will always be denied. It is those who act, who are sure to find a solitude created within them in which they are alone with God and come face to face with Reality. Moments of physical loneliness, periods of meditative retirements are needed, but they are subordinate and auxiliary. Action done as a Sadhana, as a sacrifice to God, done first without attachment to the results and then without attachment to the action itself, is the indispensable condition. And it must be action done with Shraddha, with faith, whatever action it may be; it is not only for God but from God. There will be errors, there will be stumblings, but this is the *vīramārga*, the way of the heroes, and in it one must be afraid of nothing, still less afraid of errors and stumblings. Only if we rely upon our own strength in the action, we shall go on stumbling to the end of the chapter. There must be the Shraddha that God leads, that He has taken the burden of our Sadhana upon Himself, and that every error and stumbling is from Him and intended to prepare an unfaltering and instructed strength. This is the Vakalam, of which Rama-

krishna always spoke. The nation, too, has gone on stumbling, but progressing, exhausting its errors, its sins, and the possibility of calamity and defeat, taking swiftly and intensely the remnants of its evil Karma, ever since it began its Sadhana of action. And because it took the Name on its lips when it started, the Eternal Mother will not abandon it. For the name, even when taken in vain, inadvertently, or by accident, saves alive. Much more when it is taken with heart and soul and made the foundation of the Sadhana.

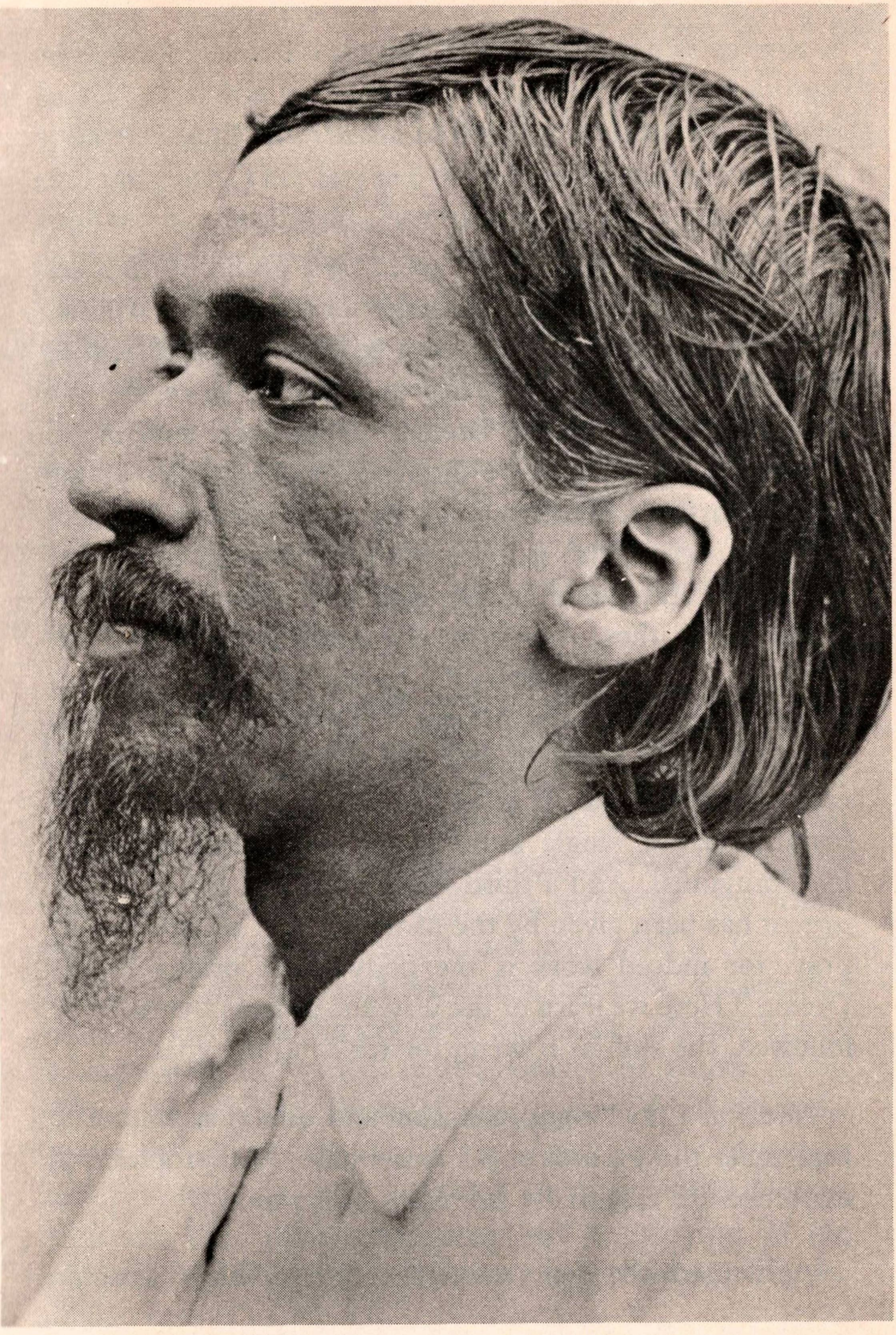
It is a national *ātmasamarpaṇa*, self-surrender that God demands of us and it must be complete: सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज। Then the promise will come true: अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः, I will deliver thee from all evils, do not grieve.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Karmayogin*, Cent. Ed. Vol. 2, pp. 431-32)

Only adore the Divine.

The Mother



Sri Aurobindo in 1908

The Ideal Centre

ONCE when the Mother was asked by a group of disciples to give permission and blessings for opening a centre, She said in answer: "To open a centre is not sufficient in itself. It must be the pure hearth of perfect sincerity, in a total consecration to the Divine." This is the first motto or *mantra* that should be inscribed on the tablet of the inner constitution of every group organisation. It states the basic spirit, the true inspiration that should initiate the work and guide it through. The second *mantra* is embodied in these words of Sri Aurobindo: "Love the Mother: Always behave as if She was looking at you, for indeed She is always present." These are words that should be kept always bright and blazing in the heart of each and every one. It gives the source and origin of the inspiration, the single fount of all movements collective and individual. And a third *mantra* not less living or less urgent has been given by the Mother: "Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine." Here we learn of the way, the process that is to be followed, the skill as it were, for realising the goal.

And for a final comprehension and direction we are to remember these words of Sri Aurobindo: "All problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony."

In life, which is necessarily corporate life (a centre

essentially means a training and a realisation in corporate life) the first and last necessity is harmony, that is to say, understanding and union among the members of the corporate life. That is a self-evident truth understood and accepted by one and all. But the crux of the matter is how to achieve the harmony. It can be achieved only on a higher level of being and consciousness, on the lower ordinary level there can be only a compromise, an unstable balance, an uncertain counter-poising of diverse and divergent elements. Also, it must be noted, that the higher and deeper the consciousness, the wider and the more comprehensive, the more the harmony becomes natural, spontaneous, faultless, perfect: and on the highest level the harmony becomes not merely union but indivisible unity.

That is the goal towards which a dedicated centre, that is to say, a spiritually aspiring group should move and labour. And that also is the primary work, the first and foremost for which the centre stands as the field. And this work can be done and has to be achieved through the discipline enunciated in just the previous, our third *mantra*—the fundamental attitude with which the work has to be done. It is said there that the work, consecrated work or service is the prayer of the body. Mind's prayer is expressed in words, body's prayer in works. Work is the prayer in its dynamic and concrete form, it is the utterance of the physical, the language it knows in order to ask for and seek the union with the Divine. It is the holy ritual expressing and embodying in the physical, material life, one's adoration, one's adhesion to

the ideal, to the deity one worships.

Work or service expressing harmonisation needs to be based, as I have said, upon a higher and higher consciousness. Work done as prayer is the best means of effecting an ascent in consciousness. This is the lesson that each individual of a centre must learn from the very outset and ever afterwards. He must always try to rise in consciousness, reach an ever higher status of being and from there let the work flow, as it were, from a spontaneous spring. As one rises in consciousness and being, naturally and inevitably this consciousness widens and one feels naturally and spontaneously kinship and union with all others. Work or service is then only a dynamic means of achieving and realising the sense of perfect unity of oneself with all other selves.

Work is not meant to show or express one's capacity or skilfulness or cleverness, nor is it a mere mechanical execution of outward acts performing certain duties however conscientiously or meticulously. It is indeed a ritual of prayer and self-dedication, adhesion and surrender of the most dynamic and material parts of our being—the most unresponsive and insensible elements—to the One Divine Will.

And this brings us to the major, the cardinal *mantra* of a centre, the *mantra* which Sri Aurobindo gives about the constant and living presence of the Mother. The very core of a centre is this Presence. A centre grows and can grow perfectly only around the Mother's Presence and Consciousness. As the ideal for the individual is to be

conscious of its central inner being and relate all its parts and all its movements to that central reality, organise itself in perfect harmony around this core of its being, even so a group-centre has to organise itself in perfect harmony around the central reality of the Mother: only so can it grow and grow harmoniously. Indeed a group, that is to say, a centre, like the individual can successfully grow into a living and harmonious dynamic Truth only when it has in its consciousness at every moment and in every movement of its life the never-failing Presence of the Divine Mother, for thus only a centre can become a divine embodiment and incarnation of the Supreme Mother for the expression and realisation of her truth upon this earth.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

(*The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Part XI, pp. 48-51)

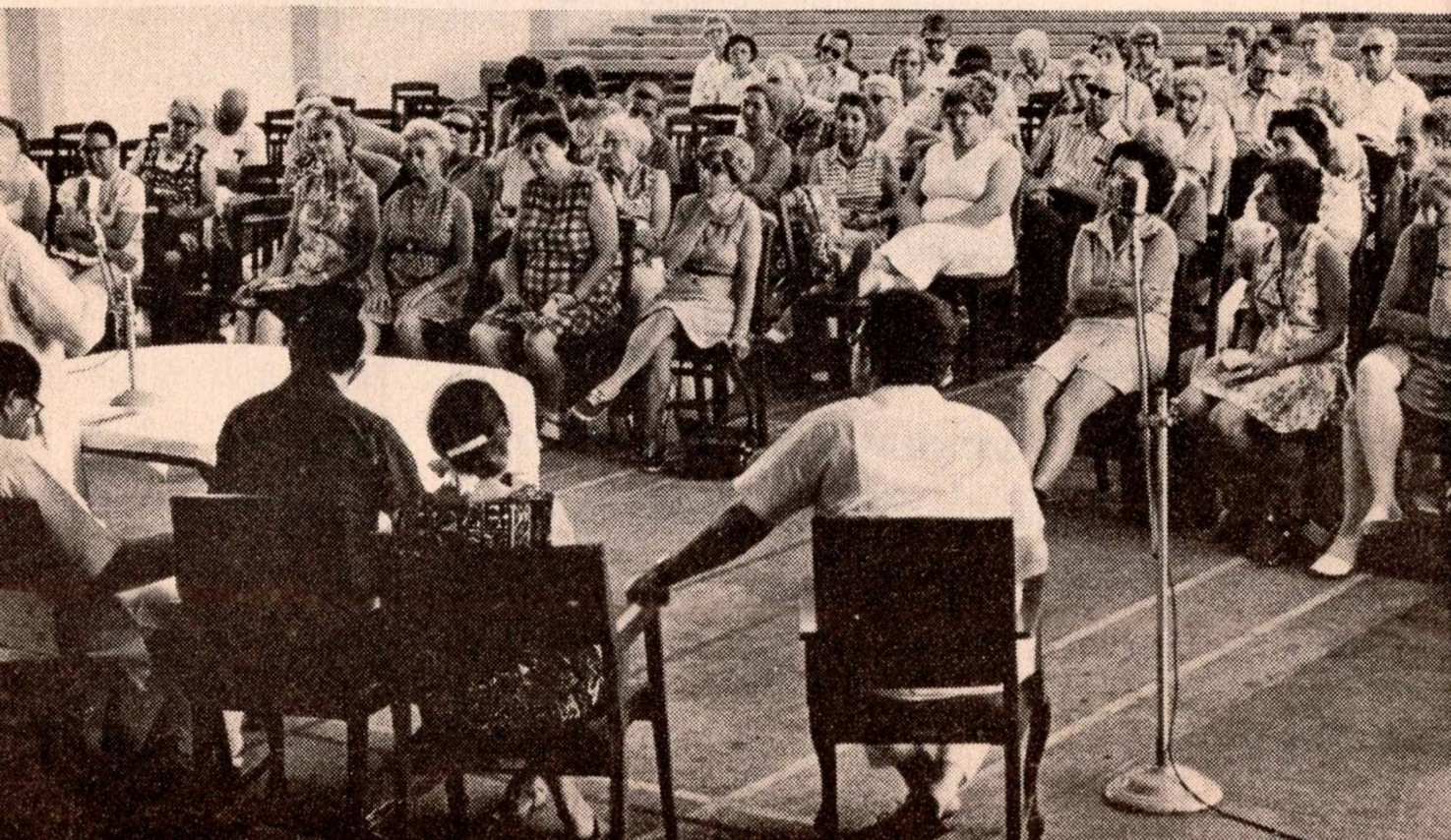
Seek only the Divine.

The Mother

Information Letter

120 EDUCATIONISTS from various parts of the United States of America visited Pondicherry for three days in August, to study the activities and life in the Ashram and Auroville, in particular the educational system that has evolved here. The visit was organised by Prof. Kim Sebaly of the Kent State University Department of Education, who had visited Pondicherry last year and was inspired by the experiment being done here. The programme included talks, informal discussions and a survey of the various activities. A drama "Immortal Fire", a scene from *Kathopanishad*, was presented in Auroville, at Bharat Nivas. The trip concluded with a get-together at the Ashram theatre.

Educationists from U.S.A. listening to a talk at the Ashram theatre



A TRAINING PROGRAMME for the teachers and associates of the Society was organised at Pondicherry from August 1 to 10, by the Department of Educational Research and Development of Sri Aurobindo Society. Prof. Norman Dowsett and Dr. S. R. Jayaswal conducted the programme, in collaboration with Dr. Maheshwar and Shri Shivabhai Amin. Several talks by other speakers were arranged. The main feature of the programme was to enable the participants to understand the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and to develop a yogic attitude towards their work.
On this occasion, a book, *Education of the Child*, edited by Prof. Norman Dowsett and Dr. S. R. Jayaswal was released. The earlier book in the series bears the title *New Approach to Education.* Both the books are priced Rs. 5/- each.

TRANSPORT facilities for visitors are now made available by the Auroville Reception Service, which has a 33 seat bus. Groups of visitors can be picked up from, or dropped at Madras. Also the bus facility can be availed of for visiting other places in South India. For charges and reservations please write to Shri Govind, Auroville Reception Service, Pondicherry 2. (Telephones: Office - 1077, Residence - 2437)

AT GONDAL (360 311) a new Centre c/o Shri N. L. Ved, G. B. Jadja Vidyamandir, Mahadev Vadi, is approved by the Society during August. Shri N. L. Ved is the Chairman and Shri D. N. Bhalia is the Secretary.